

The Significance of the Comintern Address

1. The Theses and Decisions of the Sixth World Congress determine all the work of every section of the Comintern. The line was crystallized most in the paragraphs which dealt with the entrance of capitalism into "the third period." In this "third period" of post-war imperialism capitalist economy goes beyond its pre-war level; but thereby, so far from reaching permanent stabilization, gives rise to more acute internal contradictions, which in turn sharpen the external contradictions, between the imperialist powers, between capitalism and the colonial movements, between world capitalism and the growing Socialist system of the U. S. S. R. Rationalization drives forward, the masses move to the left, the intensive exploitation of the colonies stimulates the colonial revolt, the struggle for the possession of colonies, and on the world market leads to a fresh series of imperialist wars. In this period Social Democracy becomes increasingly important for imperialism. Therefore, the tasks of the parties, laid down by the Sixth World Congress, were not only to fight against the war danger, with which is linked up the colonial struggle and the economic struggles of the workers in the "home" countries of imperialism, but to intensify the struggle against Social Democracy, to cleanse the parties of Social Democratic influences, so that in the coming struggles they may be unhampered and completely united in their fight, and, especially in this connection, to fight against the Right Danger. In terms the thesis gives this task as follows: "The establishment of the independent role of the Party in the struggles, which could be accomplished only by the concentration of the full forces of the Party against the **RIGHT DANGER AS THE MAIN DANGER** and against any conciliatory attitude towards the Right." Such a task requires from the parties the **ELIMINATION OF FACTIONAL STRIFE**, freest self-criticism, and broad internal democracy, combined with firm proletarian discipline. It is very clear that the contradiction between the historic tasks of the working-class movement and the actual situation of the proletariat objectively brings with it the danger of Right deviations: and, hence, the need of struggle against the Right.

2. The Sixth World Congress having this general line dealt also with the American Party; and, after stating both achievements

and faults of the Party and criticizing them, laid it down that the chief obstacle to the development of the Party from the position of being a sect to that of a mass Communist Party was the long-standing existence of factionalism inside the American Party. Nevertheless, the Comintern at the Sixth World Congress gave extended credit to the leadership of the American Party, in order that it should carry out the line of the Sixth World Congress and put an end to factionalism. This decision showed that the Comintern, despite all errors of the Party, had still a great deal of confidence in its leadership, and believed that finally the Party would apply the line of the Sixth World Congress.

3. The development of events in the Communist Party of America after the Sixth World Congress showed the correctness of the line of the Sixth World Congress. The radicalization of the working class, for example, was clearly in process; and the Communist Party was able to attain a measure of success on the basis of that radicalization in the economic struggle and elsewhere. But at the same time the contradiction between the tasks of the Party and the actual situation in the Party still existed and continued to exist, and many Right errors were committed: Right errors both on the part of the previous Majority and Minority factions. These errors might appear in some cases to be "Left" errors, but all the time they were opportunist errors. Factions without a difference of principle to divide them still continued, and this factionalism itself was a manifestation of opportunism. Indeed what else is opportunism but an essential lack of principle? The lack of principle was also shown in the failure *within each faction* to criticize errors. All this led to a very serious retardation of the American Party in the application of the line of the Sixth World Congress. By the time of the Convention the Party was seriously behindhand.

4. The Sixth Party convention witnessed the last effort of the Comintern to put the Party on the right line. The Open Letter showed that still the Communist International had a deal of confidence in the leaders—confidence in the Majority of the Party that they would still carry out the line. It also had a deal of confidence in the Minority that they, too, would carry out the line of the Sixth World Congress, that Comrade Foster, as a chief of the Minority, would abandon all factionalism, and would be one of the figures in bringing about the unity of the Party. But it became clear at and after the convention that he hopes of the Communist International in the Majority and in the Minority had not been fulfilled. We can say now that the Sixth Convention of the American Party was the highest point that factionalism had reached in the Party. In general, this Convention, which falsified the confidence reposed

in both Majority and Minority by the Comintern, represents so far the very acme of factionalism.

5. When the delegates of the American Party went to Moscow, and factionalism was still continued. This was true of each of these factions. The Minority showed itself lacking in any capacity of self-criticism. The Majority developed the factional attitude of the Convention. Even at the very beginning of the American Commission, in their Declaration of Ten Points, it was clear that the Majority was very factionally carrying out a factional line.

PROCEEDINGS OF AMERICAN COMMISSION

6. The American question was taken up immediately after the return of the Comintern delegation from the Sixth Convention. The comrade presented to the full meeting of the Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Communist International a detailed and full report. Thereafter it was decided to set up a Commission on the American question. The Commission, as authoritative as the Comintern has ever appointed on the affairs of any Party in a similar situation, consisted of Comrades Kuusinen (Chairman), Bell, Gusev, Kitarov (of the Young Communist International), Kolarov, Bela Kun, Losovsky, Manuilsky, Moireva, Molotov, Stalin, Ulbricht. The Commission discussed the American question for a month, and during all that month the whole attention of the Comintern was being devoted to the American Commission. No possibility to think that the American affairs were being rapidly and superficially dwelt with. On the contrary, every member of the American delegation made a statement, several members made several statements, and, in addition, questions were asked individually from most of the delegation by members of the Commission. Further, every member of the Commission made a statement at one point or another in the proceedings, and these statements, one can say, were as carefully considered and worked out (many of them written) as in any of the Commissions of the Comintern. It was a thorough and fundamental examination of the American question and one which came at the end of six years (in certain matters, of ten years) of consideration of the difficult situation of the American Party.

7. Towards the end of the Commission it became clear that the opinion of the members of the Commission was in favor of the organizational proposals by maintaining them almost intact, and at that the majority of the American Delegation prepared a statement. The statement was handed in on the 9th of May after almost all the Commission had spoken and made quite clear what the line of the

Address would be. This statement of May 9th indicated that the Majority delegation were not prepared to accept the line that was being worked out by the Comintern, and some of the wording was in the nature of a veiled threat of the consequences, if the Comintern should proceed. When the Address was prepared and the text put before the Commission, it contained reference to the declaration of May 9th and of the danger of any party following that path. Then came the meeting of May 12th, when the Commission finally discussed the draft address and decided at the end of the meeting to adopt the draft and present it to the Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Communist International. At this meeting, the representatives of the Party were asked to state their attitude. One should note that the Address had been presented by Comrade Kuusinen, chairman of the Commission, in a speech of extraordinary clearness and vigor, at the end of which he said that the factionalism of six years, various promises made and not carried out, made it necessary to ask the comrades of the American delegation, if they would accept the decisions of the Comintern:—"Yes or No?" The comrades of the previous Minority, who had received most severe criticism by the Chairman, and Comrade Weinstone, said they would accept. The other comrades said they would not make any statement until a day later. The matter was put in the clearest possible way by Stalin, but all the members of the Majority delegation refused to give a definite answer. The matter then came before the Presidium on May 14th. The draft address was presented, and Comrade Gitlow, on behalf of the American delegation, read a prepared declaration. Speakers spoke indicating their attitude to the address, which they all accepted, and then proceeded to deal with the declaration. The declaration contained one operative clause, determining the whole contents, which stated that they were "unable to accept this new draft letter, to assume responsibility before the Party membership for the execution of this letter, to endorse the inevitable irreparable damage that the line of this new draft is bound to bring to our Party."

8. Speaker after speaker, from every Party of the Comintern present at that Presidium meeting, spoke on the question and argued with the representatives of the Majority on this matter: in fact, there was not a single member of the Presidium present who did not speak. At the end of the meeting, the Address was put to the Presidium and carried by all the members of the Presidium against one vote, that of Comrade Gitlow. The American delegation was then requested to give their opinion, when there voted for the Address: Comrades Weinstone, Foster, and Bittelman; and against it; all comrades of the Majority of the delegation. Comrade Stalin then

took the floor again and pointed out that up to that point it had been possible to argue, but now the decision had definitely been taken, the Address had been adopted: What was the attitude of the American delegation? As to the responsibility of every Communist in matters of this kind, he took a very simple and oft-used illustration of what happens in strikes when once a decision has been made to strike, and what would be the position of those who refused to carry out that decision. Comrades of the Majority were asked, one by one, whether they would accept the decision. Comrade Noral and Bedacht gave their answer, that while they had up to the last moment been against it, they were, as disciplined Communists, ready to accept and also to carry it out, execute it and to fight for it. The other members of the Majority of the American delegation, with the exception of Comrade Welsh, who stated that he would not fight the Comintern but said he could not agree with it entirely—said they would not accept. Comrade Gitlow said further that he would actively oppose carrying out all the decisions in America. Comrade Lovestone did not say so in so many words, but the whole of his speech made it clear that he took the same line as Comrade Gitlow. Then the matter was left to the Polsecretariat to take the necessary organization steps in view of the declaration. The meeting closed with declarations by a series of Lenin Students, who up to that moment had been supporting the Majority, that they would accept and carry out the decision.

CONTENTS OF ADDRESS

9. This address, adopted on May 14th by the Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, is the application of the Sixth World Congress decisions to the American situation. In these last eight months it is quite clear that the line of the Sixth World Congress has been fully shown to be correct throughout the International. We have seen a sharpening of internal contradictions and acuteness of class struggles in country after country—the May 1st battles in the German cities, for example—while of the external contradictions arising therefrom the most glaring is the growth of Anglo-American rivalry, already seen then and now reaching a higher stage, wherein the posturing of Hoover and MacDonald are played on for the deception of the masses. The contradiction between imperialism and the colonial revolt (Chinese situation in the last few months) has shown that imperialism has by no means been solving its contradictions; while India has become a main focus of the world revolution in these last five months. Lastly, the contradiction between the growth of the Soviet Union and the capitalist world has been particularly clear in

just this recent period. The five-year plan, now being adopted and worked out by the workers and peasants, is something that confirms the line of the Sixth World Congress.

10. What of the Right Danger? This danger becomes especially clear in many parties immediately after the Sixth World Congress: In the German Party in the tense and hard struggle carried out against the Right Danger, the break-way of Thalheimer and Brandler, the formation of a new anti-Comintern party, the launching of attacks against the Communist International. At the same time there was the growth of the German Party of the conciliators and those who endeavored to cover up the line of the Sixth World Congress and to support the Brandler-Thalheimer group. In Czechoslovakia the position was equally serious. In France also you had this same Right Danger developing steadily from the time of the Ninth Plenum, not liquidated at the Sixth World Congress, and reaching a point where it was very serious for the French Party. The French Party was able, without losing membership, to rectify the line and get comrades, such as Doriot, to step back into the correct Communist line. In England also there was hesitation in carrying out the line of the Ninth Plenum, a hesitation that has to be regarded as definite Right Danger showing itself in the Party. It showed itself also in the Communist Party of Italy and very definitely indeed in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

In the Communist Party of the Soviet Union there has arisen a Right opposition, showing petty-bourgeois and peasant tendencies. This opposition was against the tempo of Socialist industrialization of the country adopted by the Communist Party; it was for concessions to the well-to-do elements of the peasantry; and, in effect, it was sabotaging the development of proletarian self-criticism and inner-party democracy. The opposition was blind to the necessity of continuing the class struggle in the agricultural districts, a class struggle which, as Comrade Lenin said, does not come to an end with the establishment of a proletarian dictatorship, but takes on new forms, a struggle between the petty-bourgeois form and the Socialist form of economy. Instead of mobilizing the proletariat for this class struggle against the elements of capitalism, this opposition put forward the theory of permanent concessions with regard to the capitalist petty-bourgeois elements of the country (kulaks), and, in the last analysis, was an expression of the pressure of these elements upon the working class and upon the Communist Party.

11. This Address not only persuades, as previous decisions have done, but this time in the most definite manner binds and obliges the Communist Party of America to apply the line of the Sixth World Congress to the conditions in the United States. What are

the cardinal points of the Address? First—struggle against factionalism, indissolubly linked up with the struggle against the Right Danger. And why? Because in America—in the peculiar conditions of the development of the American Party, the little groups out of which it grew, mostly small groups of immigrant nationalities, the enormous pressure of the bourgeoisie and in particular their extremely refined methods of corruption of the working class, the social composition of the Party—the Right Danger expresses itself not only in the open opportunist errors or supposed Left, but actually opportunist errors, but chiefly in factionalism in the form of a division of the Party into struggling groups, and, therefore, in the weakening of the power of the working class. Factions are the main obstacle to the transformation of the Communist Party of the United States from a sect into a mass party of the American working class. Why? Because factionalism puts the group above the Party; puts the interests of the group above the interests of the working class; puts the interests of the group above the interests of the international movement of the whole working class represented by the Communist International. This is what factionalism does. More than that, this is precisely the characteristic trait of petty-bourgeois opportunists. Let us recall that Comrade Lenin once asked why there should be excitement over the use of the word *petit-bourgeois*, which was a definite historic category. The use of the word ought to cause not excitement and resentment, but a keen desire to probe what has happened and why it is said. The placing of group interests above the interests of the Party is essentially a trait of the petty-bourgeoisie, who always have a group attitude or an individualistic attitude, which in turn arises from the conditions of the petty-bourgeoisie within the capitalist system of production.

12. A very characteristic example of the poisonous effect of long-continued factionalism is that comrades become unable to conceive of the Party except as dominated by one or the other faction. Thus it was said in the Majority Declaration of May 14th (and also it was being whispered by members of the Minority) that the line of the Address was to hand over the power in the Party to the previous Minority. This, it is clear, was a stupid argument born of factional demagoguery and one that cannot bear any close examination. To hand over power to the Minority is absolutely against the obvious intention of the Comintern and the whole of the Open Letter and the Address in their carrying out of the line of the Sixth World Congress to smash factions. The Comintern would thus defeat its own line. But even in point of fact, it was an extremely stupid as well as calumnious argument. The Comintern rejected categorically the proposal of hold immediately a new convention: Instead the

Comintern accepts the Sixth Convention of the Party, recognizes it and consequently recognizes the direction of the Party that was chosen and elected at the Sixth Convention. In doing so the Comintern shows that it has, even yet, after six years, great confidence in the recuperative powers of the Party. To the extent that the present leadership, the Political Bureau in the name of the Central Executive Committee, at once accepted and endorsed the Address and made ready to defend it against opposition, it is clear that the confidence of the Comintern was justified. So let us hear no more of this factional slander that the Address hands over power to the Minority.

13. Here it is not out of place to recall something said nine years ago. The Moscow committee of the Russian Communist Party, as it then was, had arranged a great celebration in Moscow of the fiftieth anniversary of the birth of Lenin. It was a magnificent celebration, and, of course, the jubilee of Lenin was bound up with a recital of the achievements of the Bolshevik Party. Lenin did not attend the celebration until the very end, and then made a very brief speech, a few score sentences, and said: "It is the greatest danger for any party when that party begins to boast and to have an overwhelming opinion of itself." Thus it is a very good thing; a great merit, that the Party adopted instantaneously the Address of the Communist International. But we must not be blinded to the fact that we are eight months late in carrying out the decisions of the Sixth Congress of the Communist International. It means that the whole party must work with the greatest energy and speed to make up the time that has been lost.

14. What is the positive side of the letter? It compels the Party to apply most energetically the line of the Sixth World Congress, to take up the tasks of the Party, to take up the fight against rationalization, to mobilize the working class for the coming economic struggles, to try to transform them into an offensive, to organize the unorganized, to carry on the Negro work, to fight against the Social Democracy and against Reformism to fight against the war danger. With this last must be taken up the pushing forward of the campaign for Red Day at the beginning of August. These general practical tasks the Sixth World Congress laid down, and they must be carried out with utmost speed by the Party.

INNER PARTY LINE

15. Our first business undoubtedly is to get the Party out of the factional harness in which it has been so long, and to do this by the full development of inner Party democracy. From this present moment onward this must be our task. Full enlightenment of the

Party, through the working of Party democracy, must be accompanied by the deepest self-criticism. Self-criticism could not exist alongside of factionalism. Of course, the bogus self-criticism which consisted only in picking out the errors of the opposite faction does not count, and was merely a prostitution of self-criticism to factional purposes. Only desperate faction fighters, only those for whom group loyalty stands above the Party will fear self-criticism. Why, if the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, which is a Party which has come to power, has tasks on its shoulders greater than any other party, if such a party, at the moments of sharpest economic difficulty last year, could at that time carry out and deepen self-criticism in its own ranks, then it should not be difficult for parties which have much lesser tasks.

16. Upon all of us lies the responsibility to make this self-criticism effective: most of all upon the leaders of the Party, and of the former groupings. Minority leaders must (much more and better than they did at Moscow) give an example of really deep and searching self-criticism, and the Majority leaders must also set an example. The acid test, the hardest tasks for the leaders of the former Majority grouping, will be to know how to struggle for the Address of the Communist International even against those who were the leaders only yesterday, those who had in this Party a certain authority, Comrades Lovestone and Gitlow.

17. After self-criticism the next thing in the inner life is the complete revival of the Party as a whole, of the nuclei, of the factory groups, of meetings, throughout the whole Party, an animation of all its ranks. Next comes the bringing forward as quickly and as fully as possible of the proletarian, non-factional elements—an essential task. This is not to be misunderstood as any supplanting of present leadership, sending the direction to the devil, or “wholesale removals,” as busy rumor says. NO: it means simply that we must recognize the necessity for the Party to bring in as many as possible of the actual proletarian elements into the leading committees of the Party. This was one of the solutions which had the best healing effect in the German Party, and it will do the same in the American Party.

THE ANTI-COMINTERN OPPOSITION

18. It is quite clear that this carrying through of the line will not be accomplished without struggle. There is already a new opposition in the Party. It is not surprising, perhaps, that this new opposition up to now has been directed by those previously leaders of the Party, *i.e.*, by Comrade Lovestone and Gitlow. Many of the leaders of parties have been unable to grasp the meaning of

the new development of imperialism and all that it implies for the parties. This was so in the Communist Party of Germany, with the conciliators, Comrade Ewert and others; in the Communist Party of France, where even comrades such as Doriot—who had previously played and in the future, one hopes, will still play a very great part—took for a time a very difficult position. It should hardly be hoped that the Communist Party of America, in which the right danger was deep-rooted, should avoid this.

19. What are the characteristics of the new opposition? First, it is a factional opposition, but the faction this time is one against the Communist International; secondly, it is a right opposition; and, thirdly, it seems to link up with the whole of the international right danger. In Moscow, during the proceedings a declaration was made to the Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, then meeting, by Comrade Gitlow, in which he made unmistakably clear that objectively he was supporting the international rights in their attacks on the leadership of the Communist International and Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The same applies to the Declarations of May 9th and May 14th. It is not any accident that they do this. Because whoever in the past has begun to struggle against the decisions of the Communist International, stands upon a slippery slope and down and down they go rolling into the swamp. They use the same arguments, and sooner or later they come into line with the bourgeoisie in its attack. This seems almost to be a law, to judge from the ten years' history of the Comintern, the Law of Renegades. Every opposition against the Comintern, from Paul Levy to Trotsky, however it began, has gone rolling down into the morass of the bourgeoisie.

20. This struggle that must be carried out against such opposition must be a sharp one to be effective. It is necessary for the Party to fight hard for the line of the Comintern. This must be our tactical line against Comrades Lovestone and Gitlow. Because the harder we fight against any opposition to the line of the Comintern, the easier will it be for the whole Party membership to understand the situation. More than that. It is not good to hide from the Party a situation like his. Too much has been hidden in the past. It is necessary to tell the Party everything very strongly, clearly, and simply. The struggle waged, the blows put in, the harder and sharper we fight for the Communist International, the more chance is there that the comrades who have been hesitating will begin to realize the road they are beginning to take, and whither it will lead them.

21. The Party is wholehearted in this struggle, has been

from the beginning. It is a Comintern Party. But to deepen acceptance and endorsement into the fullest possible Communist understanding is necessary. Therefore, clearly our chief task for the moment will be an enlightenment campaign throughout the whole of the Party. But we must not simply have an enlightenment campaign, but must also treat this as the moment for beginning to build up the Party, getting new members, recruiting, taking up all our practical tasks, fighting against reformism, etc. At the same time we can perhaps concentrate on building the membership among the Negroes, one of the tasks the Party has still to make effective. We can also strengthen our trade union work, and do this in conjunction with the preparations for the Trade Union Educational League Convention in the early fall. We must carry on as fiercely and energetically as we can a struggle against the war danger, linking it up with the preparations for International Red Day on August First.

22. On the question of building up discipline within the Party, first of all within the Central Executive Committee and Political Bureau all understand and know only too well that one of the effects of the six years of factionalism has been that Party discipline did not have any great validity; factional discipline had greater and greater validity. Throughout these years, in both the factions there was a super-sensitised condition of the nervous system, an abnormally quick communication of all factional news and all rumors, especially rumors. It is very difficult to restore the normal condition of a Communist Party, which is that, if in the leading body of the Party a decision is taken and it is agreed that this should not be made public, then it remains within the leading body. This has not been the condition for many years in the American Party. To stop this, it is not enough to have resolutions. We must bit by bit build up the Communist Party discipline.

23. But the membership should not have any illusions. It is no use to imagine our work will be easy. We cannot wipe out six years of factionalism simply by the fact that now we accept the Address. Clearly we are bound to admit that we may and probably shall find recrudescences of factionalism turning up even inside shall find recrudescences of factionalism. The American Party is not composed of angels, and the "old Adam" is still there, strong in everybody. But each fresh recrudescence that takes place in our ranks will require the aid of all the comrades towards any comrade showing it, to combat it and enable him to overcome it. Only by having no illusions in the struggle, and thereby being able to help all comrades to overcome any revival of the old factionalism, shall we be able to go forward, united, to apply the line laid down by the

Sixth World Congress, and, above all, to transform the Communist Party of America from what it has been into a mass party of the working class.

Since the above was written, a new stage has been reached in the situation of the Party. From the very beginning it was so abundantly clear that the Party membership as a whole, especially the proletarian elements, would not tolerate open opposition to the decisions of the Communist International, no matter from what quarter it came, that in the United States those who were opposed did not dare to proceed to acts of open opposition or breaches of Communist discipline but maintained their disagreement nevertheless. This is the Concealed Opposition. This Concealed Opposition follows the tactic of a formal profession of disciplined acceptance and accompanies it with an underground campaign against the Address, a campaign which expresses itself by the maintenance of the old factional groupings, factional circulation of documents, including distortions of the plain and open meaning of the Address. Along with this attempt to sow distrust of the Communist International and of the present leadership of the Party, there goes a campaign of whispering and of subtle sabotage of the work of the Party, of the enormous tasks that confront it. With this Concealed Opposition Comrade Lovestone has now formally aligned himself, thus receding from his previous position to what is considered a stronger tactical line, exactly as the German armies retreated from their previous position to the famous Hindenburg line. This Concealed Opposition—really more sinister than an open fight against the Address will not be tolerated by the Party or by the working class. The Enlightenment Campaign—carried on fully and freely with the utmost self-criticism and full inner-party democracy, throughout all the basic units—combined with the devotion of the Party to its tremendous practical tasks, too long neglected amid the factional strife, will liquidate this and every other form of opposition to the Address of the Communist International.